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ABSTRACT

Luzerne County Community College (Pennsylvania) received funds to articulate its program with three vocational/technical high schools in its service area. The proposal involved establishing a consortium intended to develop greater cooperation and more effective career education planning, to eliminate duplication, and to provide greater use of facilities. The project began with formation of a Joint Planning Committee consisting of the vocational/technical school directors and the college dean of instruction. Outside, impartial consultants were hired to administer the project. Three types of articulation were identified: conventional--advanced standing for qualified vocational students; administrative--administrators from each institution to meet and discuss coordination methods regularly; and interdependent--sharing facilities and eliminating duplicated offerings. Common curricula at the vocational/technical schools and the college were then identified, and instructors in the seven identified areas met to determine criteria for award of advanced placement credits to vocational graduates entering the college and to identify other areas of cooperation. Students at the high schools were surveyed as to their educational plans and interests; results indicated an overwhelming need for articulated postsecondary opportunities. (TR)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE/VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL ARTICULATION
THE THIRD PARTY METHOD

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Art:ulation between occupational education at the secondary and post-secondary levels is demanded by the soaring costs of this type of education. Duplication of effort will no longer be tolerated by the public as reflected in the school board's reluctance to pass yearly budgets. "Cut back." is the cry of the overtaxed system. The 1976 Vocational Amendments debate placed accountability on the national, state and local advisory committees to see that funds appropriated are spent wisely. State department administrators are urging the local districts to combine efforts with neighboring schools and industry to achieve the goals of occupational education without waste.

Articulation is seen by most to be a valuable, needed method of offering the community a total educational program without duplication and excessive cost. Many programs have not been able to achieve coordination because of barriers set up by all concerned. Aleene Cross, past president of the American Vocational Association, identified three barriers:

1. institutional isolation
2. administrative separation
3. leadership among school personnel

Institutional isolation is one of the greatest barriers to achieving articulation. The system has labeled each institution for a specific task to serve individual needs and educators who claim flexibility have carved these so-called status purposes into rock. Administrative separation is caused by those administrators who feel there is no place for occupational education in higher education. The tradition has been that higher education is academic,

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the community college administrators have felt that they must offer the first two years of a baccalaureate program and aspired to become four-year degree granting institutions. The present leadership is a product of the academic system that presents promotions in the development of occupational programs.

The Luzerne County Community College, located in northeastern Pennsylvania, was granted funds to articulate their program with the three vocational-technical schools in their service area. The proposal was to form a consortium to provide vocational technical education among the Community College and the Hazleton, West Side and Wilkes-Barre Area Vocational Technical High Schools. The intended result was greater cooperation, more effective career education planning, to eliminate duplication, and to provide greater facilities planning and usage. It was the lack of adequate communication, coordination and cooperation among the four institutions that motivated the administration to attempt the consortium approach. The objectives of the project were to:

1. establish a joint planning committee,
2. avoid duplication,
3. provide better utilization of facilities and staff,
4. advertise the career ladder concept to the four institutions and in the public media

It was anticipated that the project would increase effectiveness in delivery of vocational education and result in better facility and staff utilization at a lower cost without unnecessary duplication and with increased opportunities for the students of Luzerne County.

The project initiators (the Community College) were faced with the previously mentioned barriers. To further complicate the task at hand, there was diversity between the three vocational technical schools. The West Side Area Vocational Technical School is a full-time comprehensive vocational technical high school, while the other two were half-time comprehensive vocational technical high schools. Wilkes-Barre and West Side Area Vocational Technical Schools are within six miles of the community college, while Hazleton Area Vocational Technical School is 24 miles away. The course offerings were also different in some cases. Courses that carried the same title contained different content. The West Side Area Vocational Technical School has a full-time adult program--two of the areas duplicating the Community College offerings.

The project called for the hiring of an administrator that would be acceptable to the chief administrators of the participating institutions. The

problem of any one of the institutions hiring a person to form the consortium might lead the others to question where that individual's loyalty would lie. The administration of the community college decided that the best way was to hire outside consultants to perform the role of the project administrator. At the onset, The Pennsylvania State University was contacted for a possible candidate to serve as administrator. The rationale for this decision was based on the fact that the vocational staff of The Pennsylvania State University had previously had a good working relationship with area vocational technical schools, as well as with the occupational vocational staff at the Luzerne County Community College. The staff members of The Pennsylvania State University had the respect of the faculty members of the Luzerne County schools involved, and thus it was felt that they could look at the problems and solutions in an impartial manner. It was through this contact that two consultants were obtained to fulfill the objectives of the project. Thus, the third party concept was initiated. The consultants could work as an independent party with the total objective being articulation without concern for any particular institution.

The project began with the formation of the Joint Planning Committee (JPC). The committee consisted of the directors from the three vocational technical schools, and the Dean of Instruction from the Community College. The first meeting of this group was attended by the Community College president. At this meeting the consultants and the committee adopted their plan of action to bring about the much needed articulation approach. The JPB identified the three types of articulation that they would strive to achieve:

1. Conventional - advanced standing for qualified vocational students
2. Administrative - the administrators of the four institutions to meet and discuss coordinations methods on a regular basis
3. Interdependent - the sharing of facilities and elimination of duplication of offerings where necessary

An open forum of discussion was initiated by the consultants to bring out individual concerns of each school; they decided on the Interdependent Model.

The next step was to identify the areas that were offered at the vocational schools common to the Community College. This was done to consider the areas of advanced standing for vocational-technical students who desired entry into the Community College. The following seven areas were identified: 1) architectural drafting, 2) nursing, 3) construction electrician, 4) mechanical drafting, 5) plumbing and heating, 6) fashions careers, and 7) electronics.

The JPC agreed that the amount of credits to be awarded and the method of determining who qualifies, should be left to the instructors of the respective occupational areas. Each group of occupational area instructors would meet in a series of four workshops to discuss their individual curriculum and work out their recommendations. The committee established the following criteria for the instructors:

A. The amount of credits to be awarded to qualified area vocational technical school students

B. The process of determining the number of credits to be awarded

Examples:
1) Automatic for area vocational technical school completion
2) Grades earned
3) Recommendation of area vocational technical school instructor
4) Examination
5) A combination of the above
6) Other (suggestions that would come about from a meeting)

C. A list of visual aids that could be shared by the instructors from each institution

D. A list (Luzerne County Community College) of courses that could be taken by early admission area vocational technical school students

The instructors would prepare a final report and present it to the JPC. Item D, above, was the result of a discussion by the JPC in which exceptional vocational students could enter the community college for selected courses in their senior year. This earning of credits during the senior year, coupled with the advanced standing credit, would be a great incentive for the student to further his/her education. Over a two month period, the instructors in the seven areas met in their work sessions with great enthusiasm. Four sessions were held, one at each school, providing the opportunity for each to become familiar with the other's facility and equipment. The instructors then presented a written and oral report to the JPC. The report was given by the instructor of the Community College who served as chairperson during the workshops. The project's objectives were far exceeded as it pertained to the instructors. They met the tasks set forth by the JPC and in most cases went far beyond. The following is a list of benefits common to all groups as presented by the reports:

1. Sharing of films, texts and visual aids
2. All occupational areas instructors will meet at least once a year
3. Vocational technical school students be made aware of the community college offerings in occupational/vocational preparation
4. Sharing of teaching methods and content of curriculum
5. Learning resource center and career resource center at Luzerne County Community College is available to area vocational technical school students
6. Luzerne County Community College personnel will visit individual vocational technical labs on request
7. All vocational students in the areas reviewed can receive advanced standing
8. Seniors who qualify can come to Luzerne County Community College to take early admissions courses

The present trend of taking the student's individual needs into account and the fact that not all courses are the same, came about in the instructor's method of determining the amount of credit and the process of obtaining those advanced standing credits. In the final reports, the advanced awarded credit recommendations ranged from three to eighteen credits. The process went from automatic, area vocational technical school recommendation, to skill and knowledge competency testing. Each group came up with an individual criteria with which they felt they could work. All agreed that this was long overdue.

The next step was for the JPC to review and discuss the recommendations. After a few alterations, the report was submitted to the president of the Community College, who presented it to the curriculum committee for approval and implementation.

To assist the JPC in identifying student interest in further education and the type of occupational areas desired in education beyond high school, a survey was conducted of all three vocational technical schools and all three grades (tenth, eleventh and twelfth). To insure a high percentage of the school population, the survey was run for two consecutive days. The results of the survey were analyzed through a computer. The total number of students surveyed was 2,682. The most significant finding was the fact that approximately 35 percent or nearly 1,000 students, indicated a desired part or full-time education beyond

high school. Five hundred forty-seven (547) of the students surveyed stated that they definitely wanted this education to be located within commuting distance from their present location. Seven hundred eighty-one (781) indicated an interest in vocational technical education beyond high school. The majority of these showed interest in the occupational area in which they were presently studying, as the area for future study. It now appears that the Community College and vocational technical schools must consider not only the needs of the adult population, but also the needs of the area vocational technical school graduates. A factor of consideration was additional occupational areas that might be considered by the four institutions. There was no significant response for additional areas. Six hundred sixty-three (663) students stated that they desired further study in their present occupational area. This considerable number brings about questions that must be answered by the JPC.

1. Does the vocational technical school offer post-graduate work (year 13 and 14)?
2. Should the Community College duplicate those trade areas for advanced study and/or associate degrees in auto mechanics, plumbing, electrical, etc.?
3. Should an indepth program be established in which the vocational technical schools offer advanced skill training with the Community College providing the complimentary academic course work for associate degrees?

The survey results appear to indicate a need for articulation. In consideration of numbers, requested courses and present ongoing programs, articulation appears to be the most practical approach to meeting the needs of the community. This would allow flexibility without the expense of new programs, buildings, or the purchase of equipment. Total use of the building twelve months a year, and additional hours per day, can bring down the cost of occupational education, while offering the community a total program.

The JPC will continue its efforts to accomplish the following:

1. Sharing of facilities
2. Joint brochures and media advertisements
3. Joint cooperative education and placement services
4. Consolidation, where practical, of adult full-time and part-time courses
5. Establishment of additional associate degree programs

The third party method is, by no means, the total answer to articulation between area vocational technical schools and community colleges. This method worked in this community and brought about a cooperation that appears to have the ingredients to continue in the future.